

HOW MEMBERS OF THE CHURCH OF JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY
SAINTS WITH DIVORCE IN FAMILY OF ORIGIN ESTABLISH
SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGES

by

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ABSTRACT

The intergenerational transmission of divorce has been well documented by research; however, some children of divorce have established successful marriages of their own. Exploring the ways in which these individuals have established successful marriages reveals strategies that could enable others to avert divorce.

One group that appears to differ from others in marital demographics and beliefs is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This study focused on determining how members of The Church of Jesus Christ avoid the intergenerational transmission of divorce by exploring the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs they feel are key to the success of their marriages and how those marriage-saving beliefs are acquired.

Interviews were conducted with 12 active members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who were married for at least 8 years. To facilitate comparison, individuals from intact families as well as those whose parents divorced were interviewed. The interviews were transcribed and analyzed, and theory was developed using the grounded theory method.

Analysis of the strategies children of divorce employ to establish successful marriages has revealed several themes. It appears that children of divorce focus on alleviating problems, while children of intact families focus on efforts that strengthen commonalities through positive interaction. Individuals from divorced families seem to define success in marriage as marital stability (whether the couple remains married).

Individuals from intact families, however, judge the success of marriage according to marital quality (a couple's deriving fulfillment from their marriage). Further, it appears that individuals from divorced families are motivated to avoid divorce because of experience and reason, while individuals from intact families are motivated by God's expectations.

Another theme is that individuals from divorced families seem to focus on their abilities to individually affect the success of the marriage, whereas individuals from intact families more frequently focus on the efforts of both partners. While all respondents reported relying on God, it appears that individuals with divorced parents rely on God to strengthen themselves so that they can effectively address problems in marriage, while individuals from intact families rely on God to strengthen the couple relationship more directly.

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
INTRODUCTION	1
Focal group	2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE	5
Marriage and divorce	5
Marriage and divorce among the religious—behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs	7
Marriage and divorce among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs	9
Children of divorce	12
Religious children of divorce.....	13
Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who are children of divorce.....	14
STUDY PROPOSAL.....	17
METHOD	20
RESULTS	23
Behaviors	26
Differences	26
Similarities	31
Attitudes.....	33
Differences	33
Similarities	38
Beliefs	40
Differences	40
Similarities	46
Methods of Acquiring Beliefs.....	50
DISCUSSION.....	54
Implications.....	54
Suggestions for Further Research	55

APPENDICES

A: KEY CONCEPTS	57
B: INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT	58
C: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS	61
D: PRINTED QUESTIONNAIRE	66
REFERENCES	67

INTRODUCTION

The intergenerational transmission of divorce is well documented (Amato, 1996). Individuals with divorce in their families of origin are more likely than those from intact families to see their marriages end in divorce (Bumpass, Martin, & Sweet, 1991; Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Heiss, 1972; Keith & Finlay, 1988; Kiernan & Cherlin, 1999; Kulka & Weingarten, 1979; Pope & Mueller, 1976); however, some from divorced families have established successful marriages. Exploring the behaviors and attitudes of couples from divorced families of origin who have maintained successful marriages could reveal strategies that would allow other individuals to avoid divorce.

Demographic variables and background characteristics as well as behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs are associated with marital quality and stability (Amato, 1996; Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Gottman, 1999; MacKinnon, MacKinnon, & Franken, 1984; Wamboldt & Reiss, 1989). Individuals who choose to establish successful marriages are more likely capable of changing their behaviors, attitudes, or beliefs than their demographic and background characteristics. Therefore, in the exploration of the strategies children of divorce adopt to succeed in marriage, we focus on their behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs.

Because of the correlation between specific behaviors and marital quality, people sometimes assume that the solution to divorce lies in adopting specific behaviors.

Effective communication skills and conflict resolution techniques, for example, are often touted as critical to marital success (Gottman, 1999; Robinson & Blanton, 1993).

Nevertheless, research has shown that behavior originates from attitude (Sheeran, Norman, & Orbell, 1999). Attitude, as defined by Fishbein and Ajzen (1972), is a predisposition to respond in a generally favorable or unfavorable manner toward an object. Eagly and Chaiken (2007) likewise characterize attitude as an individual's propensity to evaluate an object with some degree of favor or disfavor.

This predisposition is built on a combination of beliefs. “[A] person’s attitude toward an object is related to his beliefs about it” (p. 507), Fishbein and Ajzen (1972) have stated. Beliefs, according to Fishbein and Ajzen, are a set of concepts which an individual esteems as having particular characteristics or leading to particular outcomes.

Thus, from a set of beliefs, an affective disposition toward an object—an attitude—is formed. Some of an individual’s attitudes ultimately result in behavior. In marriage, relationship-nurturing behaviors stem from attitudes, or predispositions to view the spouse or the marriage favorably. Exploring the specific attitudes children of divorce adopt to maintain successful marriages and the beliefs on which the attitudes are built, as well as the ways in which the beliefs are acquired, may enable others to avoid the intergenerational transmission of divorce.

Focal group

One group that seems to differ markedly from others in its marriages is The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereinafter referred to as The Church of Jesus Christ). Members of this church differ from others, including those of other

Christian faiths, in marital demographics, behaviors, and beliefs (Goldzband, 2000; Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993).

One distinction in demographics is that members of The Church of Jesus Christ appear to marry at a younger age (Fu & Wolfinger, 2006), and yet are less likely than others to divorce (Heaton & Goodman, 1985). One study (Bahr, 1981) reports that the stability of marriages of members of The Church of Jesus Christ is second only to homogamous Catholic marriages. However, other research has found that “homogamous Mormon¹ marriages are the most stable” among inter- and intramarriages of Catholics, Jews, Protestants, and Mormons (Lehrer and Chiswick, 1993, p. 395).

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ also differ from other Christians in behaviors associated with marital stability. For example, they are less likely than other religious individuals to engage in premarital sex (Carroll, Linford, Holman, & Busby, 2000).

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ also hold distinctive beliefs about marriage. One teaching unique to their faith is that family relationships can be eternal. They believe that:

The divine plan of happiness enables family relationships to be perpetuated beyond the grave. Sacred ordinances and covenants available in holy temples make it possible for individuals to return to the presence of God and for families to be united eternally. (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1995)

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ who live according to high standards of moral behavior and who express and demonstrate faith in the doctrine may be deemed worthy to enter one of the temples of The Church of Jesus Christ. The temple is a sacred

¹ Mormons are defined in this study as members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints or members of The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

edifice where individuals make covenants with God. One of the covenants that may be made there is that of “celestial marriage. In this ordinance, husband and wife are sealed to one another for eternity. A marriage sealed in the temple continues forever if the husband and wife are faithful to the covenants they make” (The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Temple section).

These beliefs likely influence the marital attitudes, and hence, the behaviors of members of The Church of Jesus Christ. The study of beliefs and attitudes related to marital quality and stability among those in successful marriages may yield findings useful to others; therefore, this study explores behaviors and attitudes members of The Church of Jesus Christ feel are key to the success of their marriages and the beliefs on which the attitudes are based, as well as *how* those marriage-saving beliefs are acquired.

Comparing the responses of members of The Church of Jesus Christ who are children of divorce with members of The Church of Jesus Christ from intact families enables us to more clearly determine how members of The Church of Jesus Christ avoid the intergenerational transmission of divorce.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marriage and divorce

Most individuals in the United States will marry. The Census Bureau's report reveals that the likelihood of marriage for an American is 90% (Kreider & Fields, 2001). However, many marriages are short-lived: 50% of first marriages end in divorce, according to statistics (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002).

Research has shown that many factors are associated with marital stability, including demographic variables and background characteristics of individuals. Demographic characteristics that are positively correlated with marital stability include age at marriage (Amato, 1996), level of education (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002), and socioeconomic status (Korman & Leslie, 1985). Other demographic variables related to marital stability include religious affiliation (Kaslow & Robison, 1996) and race: divorce rates are higher among African American couples (Dillaway & Broman, 2001) and interracial couples (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002).

Homogeneity of backgrounds increases the likelihood spouses will experience marital satisfaction (Bachand & Caron, 2001). Additionally, specific background experiences that increase an individual's chances of establishing a successful marriage include being raised by parents who do not divorce (Amato, 1996), participating in high-quality relationships in family of origin (Booth & Edwards, 1989), and avoiding

premarital sexual activity (Bumpass & Sweet, 1972; Lillard, Brien, & Waite, 1995). In particular, cohabitation (Booth & Johnson, 1988) and premarital pregnancy (Bramlett & Mosher 2002; White, 1990) have been shown to negatively impact marital stability.

In addition to demographic variables and background characteristics, specific individual and couple behaviors have been linked to marital quality and stability. These include communicating well (Gottman, 1999; Robinson & Blanton, 1993), resolving conflict effectively (Gottman, 1999; Kaslow & Hammerschmidt, 1992), being involved in religion (Fenell, 1993; Kaslow & Robison, 1996; MacKinnon et al., 1984; Robinson & Blanton, 1993), managing finances skillfully (MacKinnon et al., 1984), maintaining good rapport with family of origin (Wamboldt & Reiss, 1989), participating in relationship education (Markman, Floyd, Stanley, & Storaasli, 1988; Stanley, 2001), emulating role models (Glenn & Kramer, 1987), establishing a mutually-agreeable sexual relationship (MacKinnon et al., 1984), and abiding by standards of sexual fidelity (Fenell, 1993; Kaslow & Robison, 1996).

Attitudes that are related to marital quality have also been identified. These attitudes include commitment to marriage (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Lauer, Lauer, & Kerr, 1990; Robinson & Blanton, 1993); commitment to the partner as a person (Clements & Swenson, 2000; Cuber & Haroff, 1965; Lauer et al., 1990; Robinson & Blanton, 1993); loyalty to spouse (Fenell, 1993; Kaslow & Robison, 1996); low tolerance of divorce (Amato, 1996; Robinson & Blanton, 1993); a sense of humor (Lauer et al., 1990); positive self-esteem (Neff & Karney, 2009); and adaptation, acceptance, and tolerance regarding marital or spousal expectations (Fenell, 1993; Lauer et al., 1990; Weishaus & Field, 1988).

In addition, certain beliefs have been linked to marital quality and stability. Individuals who are able to differentiate family of creation from family of origin (Wamboldt & Reiss, 1989) are likely to have higher-quality marriages. Spouses who hold a shared value system, especially when the system is comprised of high moral values (Fenell, 1993; Kaslow & Hammerschmidt, 1992), are also more likely to experience marital satisfaction.

Divorce is often attributed to the presence or absence of one or more of these demographic, background, behavioral, or attitudinal factors (Amato & DeBoer, 2001; Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Gottman, 1999; White, 1990).

Marriage and divorce among the religious— behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs

Marriage and divorce statistics are different among those who are affiliated with a religion than among the general population. Religious people are more likely to marry and less likely to divorce (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Heaton & Goodman, 1985; Mahoney, Pargament, Swank, & Tarakeshwar, 2001). Bramlett and Mosher (2002) have reported that the likelihood of marriage for 25-year-old women with no religious affiliation is 53% compared to 60% for those with any religious affiliation. Their research has also shown that after 10 years of marriage, the divorce rate among women with no religious affiliation is 46%, while the rate among women with any religious affiliation is 32%. Lehrer and Chiswick (1993) have found that shared religious affiliation in particular reduces the likelihood a couple will divorce (Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993).

Researchers have identified behaviors specific to religious couples that affect marital quality and stability. For example, Mahoney et al. (1999) have found that couples who are involved jointly in religious participation are likely to have better marriages. Other research has concurred with this finding, stating that the more frequently spouses attend church together, the more likely they are to experience marital stability (Call & Heaton, 1997). The caveat to this finding is that difference in levels of religiosity between partners can negatively affect marital stability (Call & Heaton, 1997; Redd, 1999; Vaaler, Ellison, & Powers, 2009). Call and Heaton (1997) have found that when one spouse attends church more frequently than the other, the risk of divorce increases. In a similar finding, Vaaler et al. (2009) have asserted that when men attend church more often than their wives, the likelihood of divorce increases.

In addition, Dollahite and Marks (2009) have reported that some families find that religious expectations enable them to establish successful relationships through these behaviors: living religion at home through traditions, refraining from activities proscribed by religion, and being obedient to religious and family leaders.

Religion also affects marital quality and stability through fostering certain attitudes. Goodman and Dollahite (2006) have found that religion fosters a greater desire for relationship permanence, and Lambert and Dollahite (2008) have suggested that religion often reinforces commitment to the institution of marriage. Research has also shown that religious people are less tolerant of divorce (Kapinus & Pellerin, 2008).

Researchers have also identified spiritual beliefs that people feel have aided them in maintaining successful marriages. Spouses who believe that God is central to their marriage or has had a hand in the establishment of their marriage are likely to have

higher-quality marriages (Lichter & Carmalt, 2009). Further, the belief that marriage itself is God-ordained (for personal fulfillment, as the ideal way for men and women to relate to and complement one another, as a medium for spiritual development) gives spouses a greater understanding and sense of purpose regarding their marital commitment (Goodman & Dollahite, 2006; Lambert & Dollahite, 2008).

Couples have indicated that marital quality is also improved through the belief in divine intervention in marriage, either indirectly (through doctrinal beliefs or other people) or directly (through relying on God as a source of wisdom and a Being to Whom they are accountable, through receiving answers to prayer, or through the bestowal of grace in their individual lives and in their marriages) (Goodman & Dollahite, 2006).

Religious individuals also credit spiritual beliefs with a reduction of marital conflict (Lambert & Dollahite, 2006). They report that they are able to avoid some problems in marriage through espoused relational virtues, such as unconditional love. When conflict does arise, resolution is facilitated through scriptural teachings, such as repentance, forgiveness, commitment to the marriage relationship, and prayer (Dollahite & Marks, 2009; Lambert & Dollahite, 2006).

Other spiritual principles or beliefs that have been identified as central to establishing successful families include prioritizing family and religion over personal desires and relying on shared faith to overcome trials (Dollahite & Marks, 2009).

Marriage and divorce among members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints differ from other religious individuals, including those of other Christian faiths, in marriage and divorce.

Among members of The Church of Jesus Christ, the average age at marriage appears to be lower than among other groups (Fu & Wolfinger, 2006). Nevertheless, members of The Church of Jesus Christ are less likely than others to divorce (Heaton & Goodman, 1985; Mullins, Brackett, Bogie, & Pruett, 2006). This is particularly evident among marriages where both spouses are members of The Church of Jesus Christ (Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993).

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ believe that couples whose marriages are solemnized in a temple by proper ecclesiastical authority are “sealed” for eternity if they are faithful to the covenants they have made. Heaton (1988) has found that while the divorce rate for Church members married outside the temple is 28-33%, the divorce rate of those sealed in the temple is 6-7%. Mauss’s findings corroborate that the divorce rate among those who are sealed in the temple is one-sixth that of members of The Church of Jesus Christ who were married outside the temple (as cited in Bushman, 1996, p. 28). Goodman (1992) has suggested that this may be due in part to the fact that those whose marriages are sealed in the temple are likely to be active in their religion and to maintain high standards of morality and chastity.

Marital behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that are particular to members of The Church of Jesus Christ have been identified. One behavioral difference is that members of The Church of Jesus Christ are less likely than other religious individuals to engage in premarital sex (Carroll et al., 2000).

Attitudes toward marriage and divorce have also been identified. Members of The Church of Jesus Christ are more likely than others to feel ready for marriage. They are more likely to favor traditional gender-role definitions (Carroll et al., 2000). And

some members of The Church of Jesus Christ feel that it is worse for them to divorce than for others to do so. This attitude may stem from their understanding that marriage is eternal.

One belief that is unique to The Church of Jesus Christ is that a family can be united eternally through the temple sealing ordinance. The doctrine of sealing is based on a scriptural concept. As recorded in the New Testament, Jesus said to Peter, “I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven” (Matthew 16:19). In the Book of Mormon, another book of scripture in The Church of Jesus Christ, Jesus again bestows “power, that whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven” (Hel 10:7) (Anderson & Bergera, 2005). The “authority which carries the power to bind or seal on earth. . . [so that] it will be so in the heavens” is called the sealing power (Packer, 2002, p. 85).

Marriages in the temple are performed by servants of God who hold the sealing power. The couple is promised that their relationship can be eternal, meaning that if they live faithfully, after death they will be reunited as a family. As Bushman (1996, p. 25) has observed of members of The Church of Jesus Christ, “The family is central and eternal. Couples are married for ‘time and all eternity’, and their children are ‘sealed’ to them forever.”

Givens (2004) has attempted to explain the significance of the sealing ordinance to members of The Church of Jesus Christ:

[W]hile it is true that almost all Christians consider marriage a sacrament, Mormons [members of The Church of Jesus Christ] may have good reason to consider the event with even more than usual solemnity. Not only is the rite considered the last step necessary for candidacy to exaltation, but the eternal rather than the earthly duration of the relationship must give even the youngest, most starry-eyed couple pause. Believing that the human soul has an eternal past

as well as future, and that marriage does indeed make one flesh out of two, marriage can aptly be considered by the Latter-day Saint as the event that divides his or her eternal existence in twain and marks the first day of a new identity that will never end. (p. 175)

David B. Haight (1984), a Church leader, has stated that the likelihood of members of The Church of Jesus Christ turning to divorce would be much smaller if they truly understood “that their marriage relationship could be blessed with promises and conditions extending into the eternities” (p. 13).

Hagerty (1961), who conducted research among divorced members of The Church of Jesus Christ, has suggested that a study of members of The Church of Jesus Christ who establish stable marriages might reveal that the internalization of this one belief—the belief that marriage will last for eternity—may emerge as the defining difference between members of The Church of Jesus Christ who maintain healthy marriages and those who do not.

Children of divorce

Certain behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that affect marital stability have been identified as common among individuals whose parents divorce. In a 25-year longitudinal study, Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) followed children of divorce. They have found that although children of divorce fear that they are incapable of establishing a happy marriage and feel unprepared to do so, some are desperate for attention from the opposite sex or for a lasting relationship. As a result, they sometimes participate in extreme or self-defeating behaviors, such as promiscuity, remaining in abusive relationships, and behaving in self-destructive ways. Some avoid intimacy altogether (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004).

Children of divorce may view personal relationships as unreliable and worry that even close family ties may not endure. They often feel that marriages, especially their own, are likely to end in failure. When conflict arises in their relationships, some experience great anxiety, panic, or a desire to flee, fearing that conflict is the harbinger of the end of the relationship (Wallerstein & Lewis, 2004).

Additional research has shown that another attitude commonly held by people with divorce in their families of origin is greater tolerance of nontraditional family forms (Cunningham & Thornton, 2006; van der Valk, Spruijt, de Goede, Larsen, & Meeus, 2008).

Religious children of divorce

Research on the attitudes and beliefs of *religious* children of divorce is limited; however, a few attitudes related to marital stability have been identified. Greeff and Van der Merwe (2004) have studied resilience in divorced families and have found that active involvement in religion promotes resilience among families going through divorce. It appears that religious activity aids these individuals in developing the ability to respond well to life's circumstances. In essence, religion helps them develop a positive attitude toward life, which enables them to function better after divorce.

Other research has shown that among Catholics and conservative Protestants, children of divorce are more likely than those from intact families to change religion or to apostatize (Lawton & Bures, 2001). It may be that during this period of spiritual searching, the solidifying of commitment to faith or strengthening of religious beliefs is a critical difference between religious children of divorce who establish successful marriages of their own and those who do not.

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who are children of divorce

Research on members of The Church of Jesus Christ who are children of divorce is also limited. Hulse (1986) has reported that some feel isolated from other members of The Church of Jesus Christ because of The Church of Jesus Christ's emphasis on intact, eternal families. Another study has shown that children of divorce who are members of The Church of Jesus Christ, like other children of divorce, are more tentative about embracing the sacrifice and commitment entailed by marriage (Finney, 1998).

Although research on members of The Church of Jesus Christ who are children of divorce is limited, suggestions by members of The Church of Jesus Christ (children of divorce as well as those from intact families) regarding ways to overcome divorce in family of origin and establish successful marriages are plentiful. Their suggestions include implementing behaviors, developing attitudes, and relying on spiritual beliefs. These suggestions may be indicative of the ways Church members who are children of divorce will respond when asked how they maintain successful marriages.

Behaviors that Church members advocate as helpful in overcoming parental divorce and establishing a successful marriage include praying for understanding and for the welfare of your family of origin, praying for your own marriage, and praying with your spouse and children ("Dealing," 2007; Haight, 1984; Harding, 2004; Kimball, 1976; Walton, 2002). They also recommend attending the temple to worship, by yourself or with your spouse ("Dealing," 2007); studying the scriptures, alone as well as with your spouse and children ("Dealing," 2007; Walton, 2002); counseling with Church leaders ("Dealing," 2007; Haight, 1984; Walton, 2002); attending religious meetings "hand in hand" with your spouse; being chaste; working with your spouse in Church service

(Kimball, 1976, as cited in “Dealing,” 2007, pp. 51-52); communicating effectively; repenting when you make mistakes; seeking education and learning relationship skills (Walton, 2002); and showing love to your spouse (Haight, 1984).

Members of The Church of Jesus Christ have also suggested that the development of certain attitudes will foster successful marriages in spite of divorce in family of origin. Such attitudes include forgiving your parents (“Dealing,” 2007; Walton, 2002), forgiving others (Harding, 2004), turning to God for healing from your pain (Harding, 2004), having a firm determination to succeed in marriage in spite of your parents’ example (Walton, 2002), looking for the positive in your family and in others (“Q&A,” 2002; Walton, 2002), and being unselfish in your relationship with your spouse (Haight, 1984).

Church members have also pointed to specific beliefs that may help children of divorce establish successful marriages. One such belief is that God is their Father and loves them. They can rely on the security of that relationship, regardless of insecurities about their relationships with their mortal parents (“Knowledge,” 1990; “Q&A,” 2002). Another belief is that individuals can determine their own attitudes and behaviors (Harding, 2004, p. 34; Walton, 2002). Satan may try to tempt individuals to feel discouraged, but they do not have to yield to the temptation (“Dealing,” 2007, 50).

Other beliefs that have been emphasized are that God can help in overcoming personal weaknesses, that God has a plan for each individual’s happiness, and that God will be with you as you strive to establish your own successful family (Walton, 2002). Added to these are the beliefs that “marriage and families are God-given and God-ordained”; that “marriage can be a loving, binding, and harmonious relationship” (Haight,

1984, p. 13); and that people can love others in spite of others' weaknesses (Walton, 2002).

STUDY PROPOSAL

There appears to be limited research that explores specifically the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who grew up in divorced families adopt in order to succeed in their own marriages.

Therefore, a grounded theory approach was employed in this study. A grounded theory is one which is built from the ground up as patterns or themes emerge. As Corbin and Strauss (1990, p. 5) explain, “The procedures of grounded theory are designed to develop a well integrated set of concepts that provide a thorough theoretical explanation of social phenomena under study.”

Qualitative research methods such as interviewing are particularly useful in studies where the intent is to explore areas of affect, such as attitude. Because the participants can speak freely and the structure is flexible, the researcher can guide the interaction and probe deeper into areas of interest (Clandenin & Connelly, as cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). This enables a skillful researcher to develop theory as themes begin to emerge (Corbin & Strauss, 1990).

Qualitative research is often associated with a constructivist approach. Constructivists believe that individuals construct their own reality; therefore, the aim of research is to understand reality as an individual sees it. In contrast, the positivist approach to research (often connected with the use of quantitative methods) centers on attempting to define and document an objective reality (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994).

Quantitative researchers are expected to meet rigorous scientific standards such as validity, reliability, and objectivity. Validity refers to how aptly the summary describes the actual phenomenon being studied (Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994), and reliability the degree to which the summary holds true over time (Golafshani, 2003). Objectivity is the absence of bias from the research methods and summary.

Following the constructivist view that there is not one objective reality, rather, that reality is constructed differently by each individual, it has been suggested that qualitative researchers should meet standards of credibility or “trustworthiness” and confirmability (Dollahite & Marks, 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994). Credibility or trustworthiness is the degree to which those studied agree with the researcher’s portrayal of their reality. To ensure trustworthiness in this study, I restated and summarized participants’ responses, checking for agreement by the individual.

Inevitably, researcher bias enters in when qualitative methods are used. For example, bias influences the determination of which areas of discussion to pursue. However, freeing the researcher to probe into areas of interest can increase the relevance and depth of findings. Thus, the qualitative researcher strives not for objectivity but rather for confirmability, or clear identification of his/her biases.

The researcher bias that is most relevant in this study is that I am a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. I am familiar with the doctrine regarding marriage, I have lived among married members of The Church of Jesus Christ, and a number of them have shared their thoughts on marriage and divorce with me. Personal feelings about behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs key to marital success may have influenced the interviews; however, this background may also have been an advantage in

that it enabled me to understand respondents better and guide interviews more skillfully to areas pertinent to this study.

Another possible area of researcher bias is that I feel that my religious beliefs have enhanced my ability to succeed in relationships; therefore, I tried to guard against assuming that other members of The Church of Jesus Christ feel that *their* motivations to maintain successful relationships stem from spiritual beliefs.

METHOD

Personal interviews were conducted with 12 individuals (6 couples). Respondents were found through snowball sampling or networking. All of the respondents were active members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and had been sealed in the temple to their spouse. Each participant had been married for at least 8 years to the spouse with whom he/she was currently living.

Research has shown that more people divorce in the first 4 years (N. Wolfinger, personal communication based on his analysis of the Current Population Survey June 1995 Marriage and Fertility Supplement, May 10, 2010) or 7 years (Sweet & Bumpass, 1987) of marriage than at other periods. Therefore, in this study, 8 years was used as an indicator of marital stability.

Of the respondents, 6 individuals (both spouses in 3 couples) were raised by a divorced parent and 6 individuals (both spouses in the other 3 couples) were raised in intact families (see Table 1). Interviewing individuals from both of these backgrounds facilitated comparison of the marriage-strengthening strategies employed by children of divorce with those utilized by children of intact families.

Participants were interviewed in person for 1-2 hours in their homes using a series of open-ended questions and prompts regarding their backgrounds, behaviors in marriage, attitudes toward marriage, and beliefs, as well as the processes by which they acquired their marriage-nurturing beliefs. Each also completed a short written questionnaire

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Respondent	Parents Divorced	Gender	Years Married	Age at Marriage	Annual Income	Level of Education	Age When Became Member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
#1	Y	F	39	20	\$25,000-\$50,000	high school	8
#2	Y	M	39	26	\$50,000-\$100,000	some college	19
#9	N	F	11	20	less than \$25,000	bachelor's	8
#10	N	M	52	24	\$100,000+	bachelor's	8
#11	N	F	52	22	less than \$25,000	bachelor's	8
#12	N	M	8	25	\$25,000-\$50,000	master's	9
#13	N	F	8	23	less than \$25,000	some college	8
#14	N	M	11	21	\$50,000-\$100,000	bachelor's	8
#15	Y	F	8	21	\$50,000-\$100,000	high school	8
#16	Y	M	8	22	\$50,000-\$100,000	associate's	8
#17	Y	M	28	25	\$25,000-\$50,000	doctorate	8
#18	Y	F	28	20	\$25,000-\$50,000	bachelor's	8

documenting individual demographics such as education level and income.

The interviews were tape recorded. After transcribing the interviews, the responses were studied and then concepts were coded using open, axial, and selective coding techniques. In open coding, general ideas were grouped into categories and given conceptual labels. The frequency of occurrence for each concept was also recorded. During axial coding, the concepts that appeared most frequently were analyzed, and relationships between the concepts were defined. The data were then reanalyzed to verify the existence of those relationships. Finally, using selective coding techniques, the relationships were organized into core themes.

RESULTS

Analysis of the interviews has revealed several behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that are more common among those with divorced parents than those from intact families. Likewise, behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs have emerged that are more common to individuals from intact families. Comparison of the distinctions between the groups has led to the development of theories about the ways in which children of divorce establish successful marriages (see Figure 1).

Analysis of the behaviors distinctive to each group has revealed that children of divorce appear to focus more on alleviating or averting problems, while children of intact families focus on efforts that strengthen commonalities through positive interaction. Further, study of the behaviors unique to those of each background has shown that while all respondents rely on God in their lives, it appears that individuals with divorced parents more frequently rely on God to strengthen themselves so that they can effectively address problems in marriage, while individuals from intact families rely on God to strengthen the couple relationship more directly.

Another theme that has emerged from analysis of the behaviors distinctive to each group is that individuals from divorced families exert more confidence in their abilities to individually affect the success of the marriage, whereas individuals from intact families view the efforts of both partners as essential to marital success. Also, it appears that to individuals from divorced families, success in marriage is based on marital stability

Differences in Strategies for Marital Success: Individuals from Divorced Families vs. Individuals from Intact Families

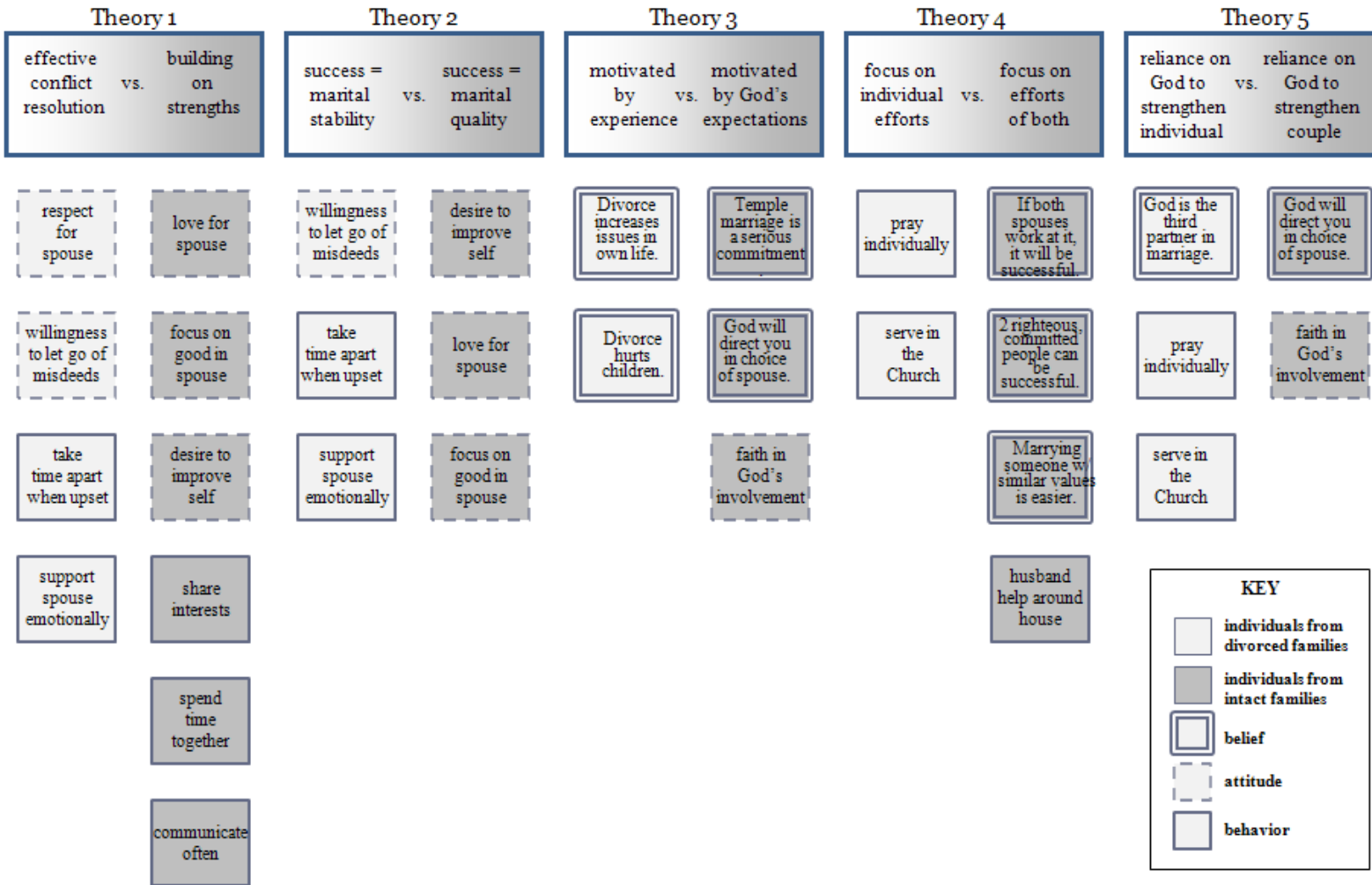


Figure 1: Differences in Strategies for Marital Success: Individuals from Divorced Families vs. Individuals from Intact Families

(whether the couple remains married), while for individuals from intact families, marital success centers around marital quality (a couple's deriving fulfillment from their marriage).

Analysis of the *attitudes* that are distinctive to each group lends credibility to the theory that individuals from divorced families rely on God to strengthen themselves so that they are able to handle the issues of marriage well, while individuals from intact families rely on God to strengthen the couple relationship more directly. Exploration of attitudes also lends support to the theory individuals from divorced families view marital success as centered around stability, while individuals from intact families appear to define success based on marital quality.

Both of these theories are strengthened by analysis of the *beliefs* that are unique to each group. Examination of beliefs has also led to the development of the theory that individuals from divorced families exert confidence in their ability to individually affect the success of the marriage, whereas individuals from intact families view the efforts of both partners as essential to marital success.

Another theory that has emerged is that individuals from divorced families appear to derive their motivation to succeed in marriage from experience and reason, while individuals from intact families are motivated by God's expectation that they establish successful marriages. It seems that for many individuals from divorced families, the temple sealing ordinance is associated with an event that took place the day they were married, while for many individuals from intact families, the temple sealing ordinance is associated with divine expectations for their current relationship.

Behaviors

Differences

Analysis of the behaviors that respondents feel are important to a successful marriage has revealed several that are more common to children of divorce than to those of intact families (see Figure 2). Children of divorce have stated more often than others that providing emotional support to one's spouse and taking time by oneself when upset are important. They also repeatedly have mentioned the value of praying individually for strength and serving in Church callings or positions.

The first two behaviors—supporting spouse emotionally and taking time alone when upset—indicate that children of divorce depend on effective conflict resolution to maintain successful marriages. This focus on averting and alleviating conflict was addressed by one respondent. When asked what has been helpful in her marriage, she replied in part that providing emotional support to her spouse was key.

[U]nderstanding. . . . [I]t's all about your attitude and how you react to things. . . . My husband has always had depression and anxiety, and just, you know, having to be that support person for him. It's hard, and I think it's easy to build up resentment, too, for it, you know, and I think you have to work on that too. And be like, "You know, this is a trial they have," and you just have to be there to support them. . . . (#15)

Another respondent with divorced parents also talked about the role emotionally supporting his spouse has played in his marriage.

If she's kind of emotionally paralyzed—kind of a time of indecision or insecurity. . . . —[t]hen she's paralyzed because she wants to please everybody. And so I just try to encourage her that, you know, either way, it's okay, and, you know, they'll be fine, and we have to make the decision that we think is better. I just try to support the emotion. (#17)

Behaviors

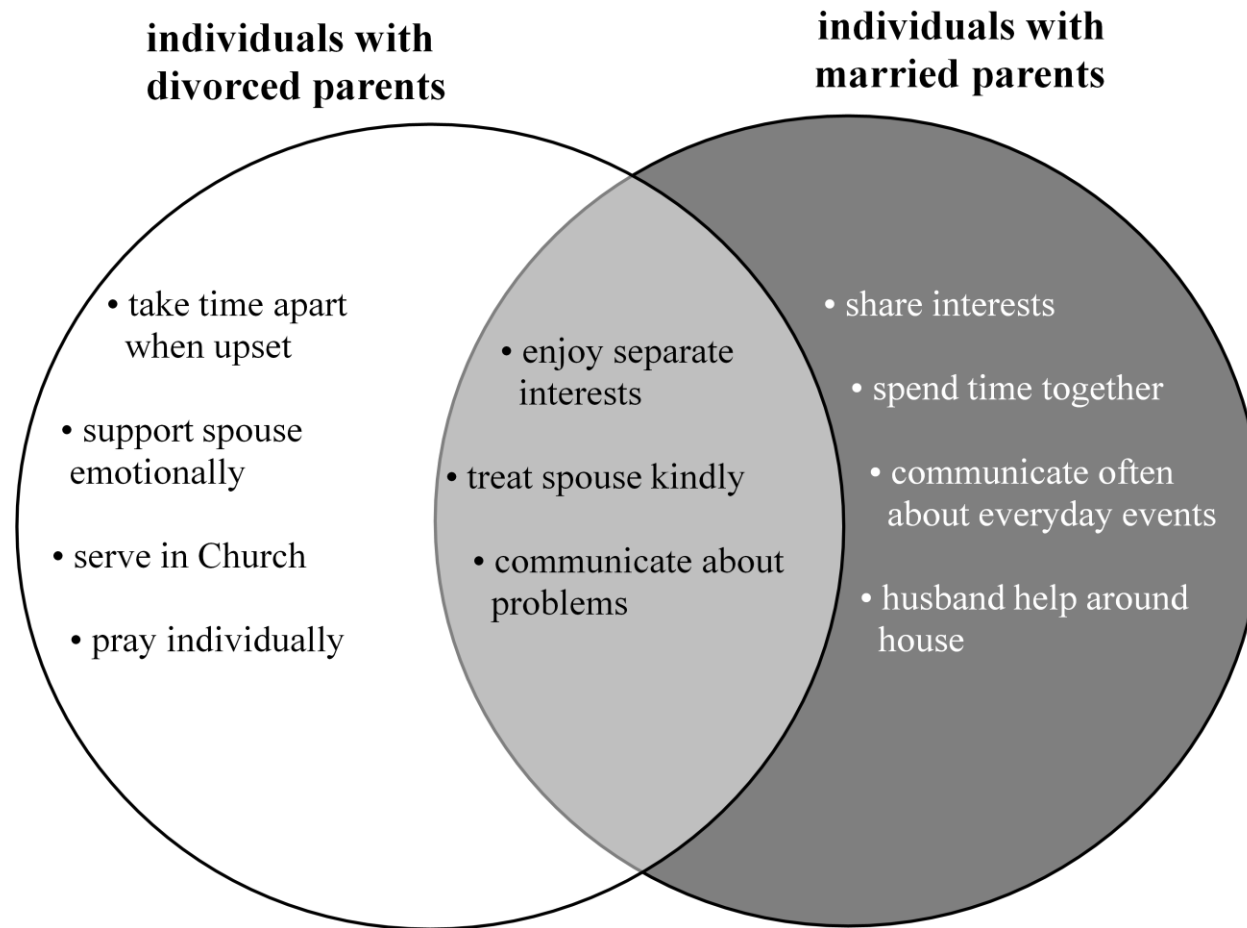


Figure 2: Behaviors

The participants allude to the feeling that supporting their spouses emotionally during challenging times can alleviate or de-escalate conflict, thereby fortifying their marriages.

In addition to providing emotional support, a behavior that many of the respondents who were children of divorce discussed is that when conflict arises, taking time by oneself is helpful. When questioned about how she finds understanding and support in challenging situations, one individual responded, “You don’t always. You walk away for a minute. . . .” (#15)

Regarding times of conflict, one man with divorced parents said with a chuckle,

You know how sometimes you can get mad, and women click things off. . . And we may have times where we just kind of. . . But it’s not something that will last very long. We’ve made a commitment that we would not let that be standing in the way. We express our feelings to each other about what happened. And there’s been times where I thought, “Well, I’m going to leave her alone for about a . . . month or so, just to, you know, . . .” (#2)

Repeated reference by individuals from divorced families to the value of behaviors that help resolve or avert conflict suggests that they seek to maintain successful marriages by focusing on decreasing points of tension in the relationship.

Two other behaviors that are more common in responses of individuals with divorced parents than in those of individuals from intact families are praying individually for strength and serving in The Church of Jesus Christ. These behaviors indicate that these respondents depend on God to strengthen them in their individual efforts to handle the challenges of marriage effectively.

One respondent gave the following advice to individuals concerned about being able to establish a successful marriage.

[G]et married, and then just try to pray every day to be patient, and try to pray, you know, to get rid of the “happily ever after” thing and just say, “This is another

part of my life, and it's going to be lot of work, and we're both different, and we can work through this." (#1)

Using prayer to help her adjust her expectations and develop required patience speaks to her reliance on God for self-strengthening. Another individual described how serving in The Church of Jesus Christ helps strengthen him to face the challenges of marriage.

[T]here's some of the tests that. . . can be a test to marriage. And yet we still go to church. [W]e're ward missionaries. So we're very conscientious of our missionary callings. And that has kind of been a saving thing. When we start getting a little caught up in [things]. . . —when that comes around, we always get caught up in doing things that will reverse that kind of feeling. Sometimes it's service and sometimes it's our missionary calling. (#2)

There are also several behaviors that individuals from *intact* families more often than others labeled as important to success in marriage. Those behaviors are sharing common interests, spending time together, communicating often about the events of everyday life, and having the husband help around the house. The first three behaviors—sharing interests, time, and daily events—center around frequent positive interaction.

One individual from an intact family described a direction he would like his marriage to take. In so doing, he expressed his feeling that sharing common interests and spending time together contributes to marital happiness.

[O]ne thing that [my wife] and I *don't* do that my parents do that I wouldn't mind if our marriage were a little bit more like theirs in that sense—is they do a lot of things *together*. They enjoy doing things *together*. Like, well, you know, they like to go on bike rides together; and they like to go out to eat together, or. . . things like that we don't. . . .
And [my wife] . . . likes to just have alone time. “The kids are in bed now. I just want to unwind.” You know? And sometimes I'm like, “Well, I wanna—I'd rather hang out. 'Cause I don't have any friends.” Like, “You're my only friend. And you're my wife.” And so, you know, sometimes, I envy that a little bit in my folks—that they just like to hang out and do things together, and we don't really have that in a way that they do. But maybe. . . that'll change. (#12)

Another spoke of the importance of spending time together and communicating often about events in life. When asked which areas in marriage are most important to him, he responded, “Just spending time together and doing things together.” In later conversation, he added, “I just think you need to be willing to discuss any concerns or issues there are with things going on around you, or—just be willing to talk about whatever’s going on. . . . (#14)

A third respondent from an intact family emphasized this idea in her advice about how to establish a successful marriage:

Marry the right person. [T]alking enough ahead of time so that you feel like you know each other’s soul a little bit. I think that’s really important. I think doing things together, sharing things, being willing to talk to each other about problems. (#11)

These behaviors—sharing interests, time, and daily events—center around being aware of and involved in each other’s lives, while the behaviors children of divorce felt were key to success in marriage appear to focus on alleviating or resolving problems. This highlights a difference in focus—one group exerting efforts toward alleviating and reducing weaknesses, the other toward building on strengths and commonalities. The focus by children of divorce appears to be putting out fires that may destroy marital stability, while the focus by individuals from intact families on continual nurturing of the positive elements of the relationship suggests a preventive maintenance approach to maintaining a successful marriage.

Another behavior individuals from intact families valued was having the husband help around the house. Both husbands and wives recognized the improvement in marital quality when the husband participated in activities such as nurturing children or cleaning. One husband said regarding behaviors that help in his marriage:

I think being willing to help with domestic things [is beneficial]. When I do the dishes, it's great. I don't do 'em very often. [W]hen I mow the lawn when she wants me to, it's great. You know, so, I think, keeping up—helping out with her stuff and keeping up with the stuff that she expects me to do are behaviors that help. (#12)

This highlights a focus among individuals from intact families on roles in marriage. This respondent's wife viewed her husband's role as partly including duties at home. He recognized that marital satisfaction increased when he filled the role his wife expected him to. The discussion of roles surfaced more frequently among children of intact families than children of divorce, perhaps because those from intact families of origin view the efforts of both spouses as critical to marital success.

Similarities

In addition to the insights gained through the analysis of behaviors particular to each group, additional insights can be obtained through examining the behaviors that members of The Church of Jesus Christ—both individuals from divorced families *and* individuals from intact families—universally stated were important to marriage. A majority of individuals from both backgrounds identified these behaviors as key to success in marriage: enjoying separate interests/pursuits, treating spouse kindly, and communicating about problems.

Individuals from both backgrounds talked about how allowing a spouse to enjoy separate interests is important for enjoyment and for release. One man with parents in an intact marriage talked about the enjoyment that comes from individual pursuits.

[W]e're not together constantly. After I came to be retired, or semi-retired, for example, she told me that she married me forever, but not for lunch. And so we had, I think, particularly as our children have grown and left home, we have not, well, I would call it "smothered" (there's probably a better word). We've left freedom to each other in addition to the closeness and the time we

spend together in our marriage. We still enjoy other pursuits separately and pursue those, as well as the things we do together. (#10)

And a woman with divorced parents explained that pursuing individual interests can be a release from other cares:

[U]nderstanding's a big thing, you know, and things that distract him. . . . You know, his mind just goes over time. [H]e. . . just is a very smart person, but I think it's harder to calm your mind down, you know, and so if he hangs out with his friends, or. . . plays games or goes sees a movie—whatever, I don't try to keep him away from those things.

We have some friends that. . . stop and do everything together. [W]e're—I'm fine with letting him go hang out with his friends or me hanging out with my friends, you know, and that's been big too for us.

It works for us. . . not having the leash so tight that you don't feel like you can escape, if you will. I don't know if that's the right term, but, you know, get away from it for a minute, and have some fun, and remember that life is not always just work. . . . (#15)

Another behavior that individuals from both backgrounds discussed is treating one's spouse kindly. Kindness in marriage reduces conflict. As one woman said, “[T]hey respond to your kindness. . . as you respond to theirs.” (#11)

Many of the respondents also spoke of the value of communicating about problems in marriage. Both those from divorced families as well as those from intact families felt that communication is an important part of effective conflict resolution.

When asked about areas of marriage that she felt were important, one woman with divorced parents responded:

[B]eing patient and communicating. I'd say he's a much better communicator than I am. I really think that, because I never grew up with a man in the home, I never saw firsthand. . . a parental relationship, you know, and how parents talk through things and work through problems. And so I feel like I never knew how you work things through. [T]hat probably is still a big thing.

[My husband] is a good communicator, so I'll tend to. . . be upset at something, and I'll just let it like simmer, you know, and then I'll blow up. [A]nd then he'll be like, “Why didn't you talk about that at the time?” or whatever.

He'll kind of drag me kicking and screaming sometimes to communicate, but it's a good thing. . . that we talk about stuff. (#15)

Another individual, a woman from an intact family, agreed that communication about problems is essential to marital success. She also felt indebted to her husband for his efforts at opening communication about problems in marriage.

[C]ommunication. . . as terrible as I am at it, if he wasn't trying really hard at it, it could be the destruction of our marriage. [W]ell, maybe not the destruction, but it could really, really weaken our marriage a lot, because the effort on his part to strengthen our communication really makes a big difference, I think. (#12)

Although individuals from both backgrounds recognized that discussing issues is key to marital success, it is particularly positive that children of divorce recognize this and are trying to implement this behavior. Wallerstein and Lewis (2004) found that individuals with divorced parents are more likely than others to fear that conflict in a relationship may signal the end of the relationship. Although respondents in this study who are children of divorce may panic or desire to withdraw when conflict arises, they are learning to adopt the behavior of communicating and working to resolve the problem effectively.

This seems to indicate the effect of belief on the behavior of children of divorce. Perhaps their belief that God can strengthen them to handle marital problems effectively or their belief that divorce is not a solution to their problems enables them to adopt behaviors, such as communicating about problems, that nourish their marriages.

Attitudes

Differences

In addition to behaviors, respondents identified attitudes they felt were essential to marital success (see Figure 3). Individuals with divorced parents more often than individuals from intact families spoke of the importance of being willing to forget or let

Attitudes

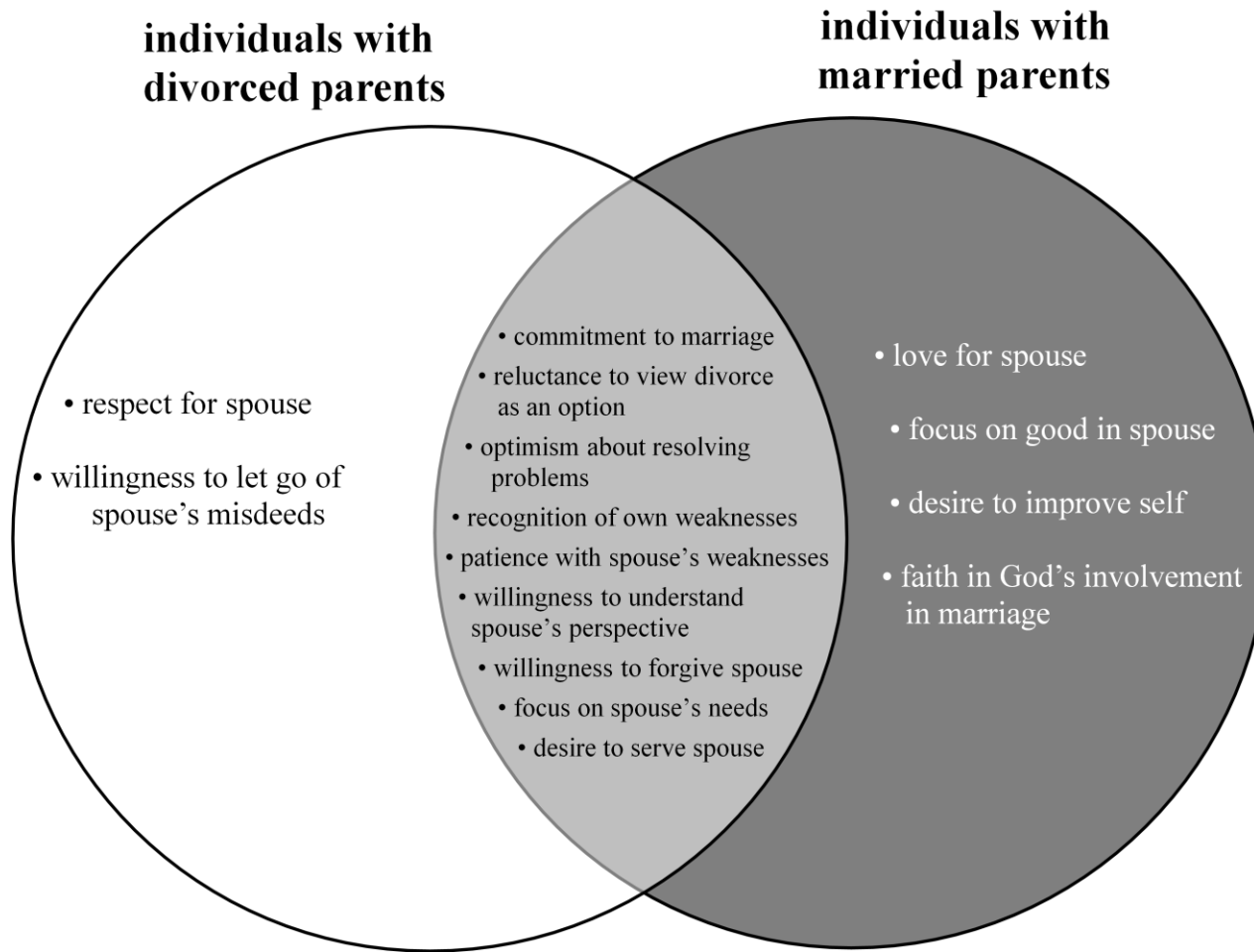


Figure 3: Attitudes

go of a spouse's misdeeds. They also believe an attitude of respect for spouse is critical to establishing a successful marriage.

One respondent summed up the value of letting go of a spouse's wrongdoings.

When asked what helps him have a happy marriage, he responded:

I think the best thing to do is just tolerate. [I]t sounds like a funny thing, but it's not. . . . [E]veryone has their quirks and their problems about them, and you just have to learn to just let it go. [D]on't let your pet peeves get to you, or let the little things bother you. I mean, people hold on to things too much. Once you do that, it just rots in you until it festers. (#16)

Another's quick response to being questioned about the attitudes that strengthen her marriage was:

You have to be willing to forgive when you get hurt, and let it go. And then not keep reminding, keep bringing it up.
[S]omething will happen where you need to use forgiveness, and you have to decide if you're really going to do it, or, I guess, what you're made of. You know, are you gonna really forgive that person, or are you going to keep bringing it up and hashing it over?
[It] comes to a point where you have to decide if you're going to have that cancer of not forgiving someone, or if you're just going to let things [go], you know.
(#18)

The value individuals with divorced parents place on letting go of issues and continuing on with the relationship reflects their view that marital stability fundamentally rests on effective conflict resolution. In addition, their frequent mention of *respect* for spouse, in contrast to the emphasis on *love* for spouse that individuals from intact families conveyed, seems to underscore this focus on ensuring marital stability by alleviating conflict.

In reflecting on what she had learned from her parents, one respondent with divorced parents stated:

You know, I think the thing that my parents *did* do, not in their marriage but outside of it, was that they never talked bad about each other and they were always respectful of each other. I never heard a bad word about the other. [T]hey were always respectful. [T]hey are still friends today. (#15)

Her admiration of the respect her parents showed one another highlights her belief that respect for each other alleviates problems and is, therefore, key to a successful marriage.

Individuals from intact families, however, more frequently stated that love for spouse, a focus on the good in the other person, and a desire to improve self are attitudes essential to marital success. They also cited having faith in God's involvement in marriage as an attitude that is important in marriage.

The first three attitudes—love for spouse, focus on the good in spouse, and desire to improve self—reflect an emphasis on nurturing the positive aspects of the relationship. When asked about attitudes that strengthen her marriage, one woman's first response was love of spouse. She explained:

I think that, in the first place, we have always loved each other a lot. And that's gotta be the most strengthening thing. I think those little things of being thoughtful to each other are important because they show you're thinking about each other, and they show you love each other. (#11)

A statement by her husband also reflected the feeling that love of spouse is key to success in marriage. He said:

I have a great love for my wife. I have from the beginning. Those bonds of love have increased in the years that we've been together, and so. . . I think—that's made it easier—she's made it easier for me to want to make it a good marriage. (#10)

Individuals from intact families also frequently mentioned the importance of looking for the good in one's spouse. They talked about how seeing the positive

strengthens their desire to build the marriage. Appreciation for spouse leads to improved marital quality. A wife described how such a change in perspective increases her marital satisfaction.

[I]t's easy for me to get caught up on little things that I don't—like the way he's eating his cereal. Or I don't like. . . the way he's doing that, but if I stop and think, "Okay, overall what kind of a person is he? Overall, what is he doing?" And that helps me to look at him and say, "Oh. You know, he really is a fabulous guy." (#13)

A third attitude that repeatedly appeared in the responses of individuals from intact families was a desire to improve oneself. They felt that “being willing to change yourself is really important.” (#11) One man said:

[S]ometimes it's. . . trying to figure out, “Well, what caused the friction? What do I need to change? What do I need to make a better effort on?” Obviously, you know, prayer's important—trying to [say], “Okay, help me know what I need to do. Help me know what I need to say. Help me figure out what I can change.” (#12)

These responses reflect a desire of individuals from intact families to improve marital quality through gradually eliminating their own faults. Rather than simply tolerating a spouse's weaknesses or resolving conflict when it arises as a result of failings, they desire to improve themselves and begin to overcome their own weaknesses so that marital quality will also improve.

It appears that individuals from intact families focus on strengthening the positive and feel that successful marriages are maintained by improving marital quality, while individuals from divorced families focus more on ensuring marital stability through effective conflict resolution and prevention.

Another attitude that was common among children of intact families is an attitude of having faith that God is involved in their marriage. One woman described the role faith in God played in keeping her marriage together.

Feeling like God wanted it to work out. . . —maybe that's what made us want it to work out more. . . . And I think that gave us faith in realizing that it should be able to work out somehow. . . .

I think having God in the mix really helps you realize that, "Okay, well, He can obviously see something good out of this, even though it looks terrible right now. So there must be something to hang in there for."

And it has made me really grateful that we have—I mean, through the hard times—because I think it really is our religion that helps to hold us together—our faith. I think that's another thing—is when you have faith in God, in religion, to hold you together, it helps you to have faith in marriage and in each other more. (#13)

This attitude emphasizes a dependence on God to strengthen their relationship. It also implies that faith in God and in His expectations of marriage motivates individuals from intact families to succeed in establishing healthy relationships.

Similarities

As with behaviors, in addition to examining the attitudes that are particular to each background, extra insight is gained by analyzing the attitudes that were universally mentioned by those of both groups. Attitudes that a majority of respondents mentioned as critical to marital success were commitment to making the marriage work, reluctance to view divorce as an option, and optimism about being able to work out problems and establish a successful marriage. They also universally extolled the virtues of recognition of one's own weaknesses, patience with spouse's weaknesses, willingness to seek understanding of the spouse's point of view, and willingness to forgive misdeeds. Further, they stated that a focus on spouse's needs instead of one's own and a desire to serve one's spouse are critical to marital success.

While not surprising, perhaps, that the respondents from intact families of origin cited low tolerance of divorce as key to their marital success, it is remarkable that respondents with divorced parents also valued this attitude in their marriages. Studies have reported that children of divorce are likely to have a higher tolerance of divorce than children of intact families (Amato, 1996).

What has enabled respondents from divorced families to develop this attitude? Although children of divorce are less likely than children of intact families to have a low tolerance of divorce, this attitude is *more* common among individuals who are involved in religion than those in the general population without religious affiliation (Kapinus & Pellerin, 2008). The fact that a majority of the respondents with divorced parents have adopted and value the attitude of a low tolerance of divorce seems to indicate the effect of religious beliefs on the development of attitudes such as this. Religious involvement, perhaps, can overcome the effects of divorce in family of origin on chances of marital success.

This is corroborated by responses from the participants. As one woman from a divorced family explained,

I think everything about the Church. . . gives you focus. When things in the world or the circumstances kind of want you to focus elsewhere, . . . it puts your focus right where it should be and on the Savior. “Okay, this is but a small moment in time,” you know. “We’re going to make it through this. . . .” (#1)

Another child of divorce stated:

I think growing up, I’ve always had a very strong testimony of the Church and eternal families. I’ve always known families are eternal, you know, and I think about it a lot. And I’ve always had a very firm belief in the gospel. . . . Internally I know those truths, so I think that’s helped. Just made my marriage. . . . [A]nd knowing how I felt when I got married. And I think even more than being taught it—just praying about it and just knowing for myself that it was true, you know. (#15)

Children of divorce may find that becoming involved in religion aids them in overcoming the trend of divorce in their families. It may be that religious involvement mediates the effect of parental divorce on offspring's chances of marital success.

Beliefs

Differences

Analysis of the responses of those interviewed has revealed beliefs that are more common among individuals with divorced parents than those from intact families. Beliefs that are more particular to individuals from intact families have also emerged (see Figure 4).

One belief commonly mentioned by children of divorce is that in a temple marriage, God is the third partner in the marriage. Other beliefs expressed nearly universally by children of divorce are that divorce brings increased complexity into one's own life and that divorce hurts children.

Individuals with divorced parents articulated the belief that God is the third partner in a temple marriage. As one woman explained,

I feel like the day we got married there were three involved, and one of them was our Heavenly Father.

‘Cause I feel like most people—you know, a man and a woman can get married and probably figure it out, even if they're very different, if they're willing to have the Lord involved in the marriage.

‘Cause if that's there, then you have to be kind to each other; you have to be Christlike, and then a lot of the problems go away. (#18)

Another man with divorced parents expressed how crucial this belief has been to his marriage. He said, “We had some deeply-rooted feelings for the Savior, and He was a part—a large part—of our marriage. And that's the way we've accomplished it.” (#2)

Beliefs

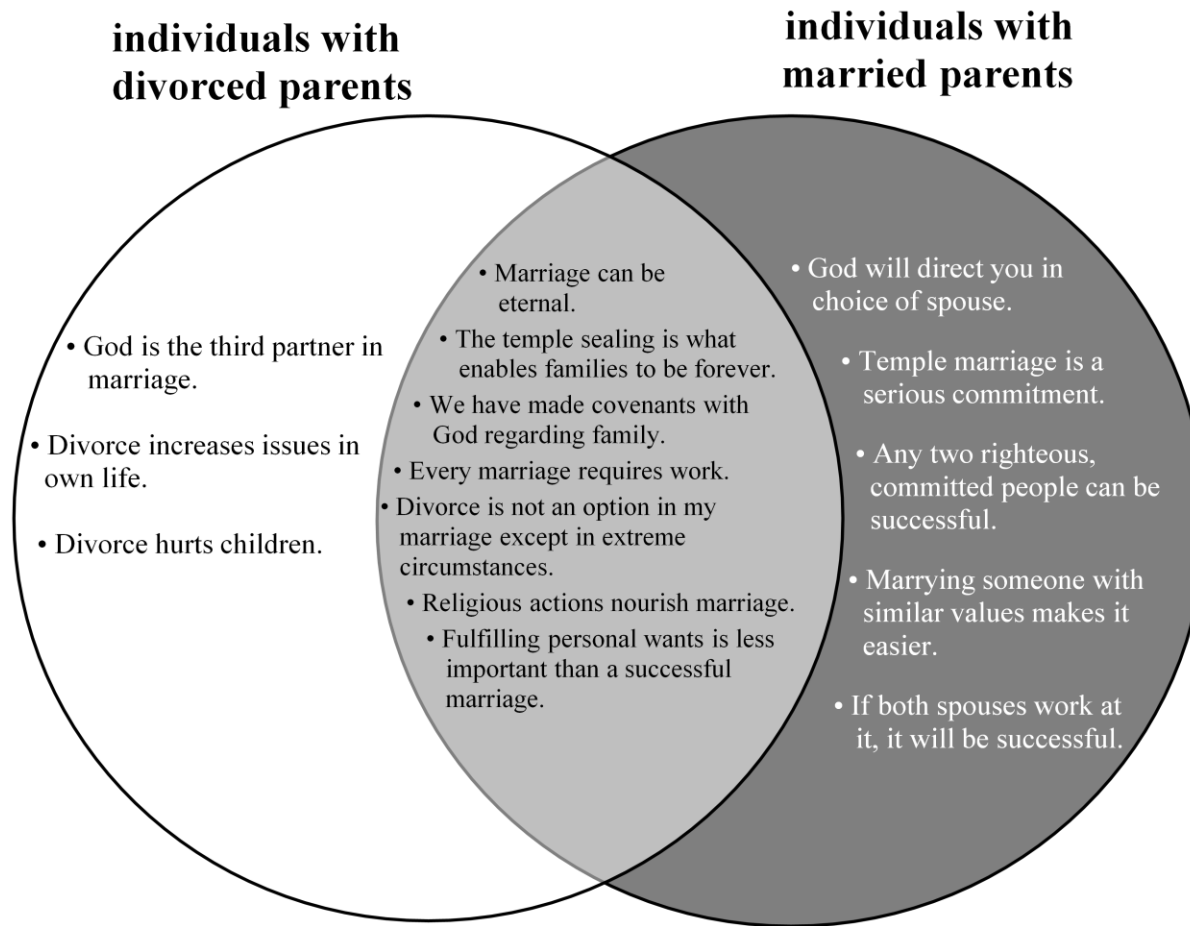


Figure 4: Beliefs

This belief lends support to the idea that individuals from divorced families rely on God to strengthen them so that they can then handle the issues of their marriage effectively.

Another belief that was common to children of divorce was the idea that divorce does not simplify one's life; rather, it complicates issues in one's own life. One respondent explained her reasoning in this way.

[My husband said] something like, "We both just decided that once you get married, divorce doesn't solve your problems if you're having them. It just changes the problems." It doesn't make them go away. In fact, it makes them worse in a lot of ways. So, why go there?

Not unless there was abuse involved, you know, emotional or physical abuse, because the problems just change.

I mean, my parents just still don't like each other, and it just allows those feelings to escalate and get worse and worse. . . . It's [my daughter's] graduation, and my dad will say, "Well, I don't wanna come 'cause your mom's gonna be there," and it's just so dumb, you know. We just can't all just be ourselves." (#18)

She describes one difficulty that surfaces as a result of divorce—a person often must continue to deal with the former spouse because they both desire to remain involved in the children's lives.

Another respondent suggested that divorce can complicate one's life because it destroys a relationship in which much effort and time and emotion have been invested over the years. He said, "[T]hey may make a big mistake or something like that, . . . but why throw away a relationship that's 8-10 years down the road just because someone makes a mistake?" (#16) Others also expressed resistance to the idea of creating a marital relationship with someone new because they believed that it would require starting all over and exerting the same kind of effort already exercised in establishing the relationship with their current spouse.

Another belief expressed repeatedly by individuals from divorced families is that divorce hurts children. They feel that “it’s easier on the children if you’ve done everything to stay married.” (#1) One man described his foundation for such feelings.

[W]hen I got married to [my wife], in my deepest feelings were that I knew what she went through, you know, to a big degree. She knew what I went through. And it was kind of this little covenant between us to never ever have to see your mother cry.

She watched as her father. . . and as her mother sobbed in the night. . . . Well, the walls were kind of thin. And I watched the same thing. I thought, “Oh, my goodness. I *never* want that in my life. Ever.”

And we vowed when we got married that we two would never do anything to hurt our children in any way. The word “divorce” would never be part of an argument. (#2)

The beliefs that divorce increases issues in one’s own life and that divorce hurts children are the motivation children of divorce give for avoiding divorce. It appears, therefore, that experience and reason foster low tolerance of divorce among individuals with divorce in family of origin.

Individuals from intact families also repeatedly cited several beliefs they felt were important in the establishment of successful marriages. One belief they expressed is that any two righteous people who are willing to work to create a successful marriage can have a successful marriage. Another belief common to this group is that God will direct individuals in their choice of spouse if they ask Him. They also believe that marrying someone with similar values makes it easier to work things out in the relationship. The idea that a successful marriage requires the efforts of both spouses was another belief discussed by individuals from intact families. One other belief they expressed is that because temple marriage is for eternity, it is a serious commitment.

The belief that any two righteous people who are willing to work at it can create a successful marriage was explained by one man in this way: “There’s the quote from one

of the prophets. . . that I heard on my mission that said that basically any two people that are righteous and worthy and are working on their marriage can have a happy marriage, and can have an eternal marriage.” (#14) Because one of the conditions mentioned for the promise of success is righteousness, this belief suggests that individuals from intact families feel that if God is a part of their marriage, they can be successful.

Another belief frequently mentioned was the idea that God will direct individuals in their choice of spouse if they ask Him. They express the idea that God can be involved in marriage from the very beginning. As related by one respondent,

[My mom] said, "So really, you really need that confirmation from God that this is what He wants, . . . that He's okay with this marriage. . . . And so, if you have your confirmation from Him, you know, your answer from Him that this is a good thing for you, then go ahead with it.” (#13)

In addition, individuals from intact families believe that marrying someone with similar values, especially similar religious values, makes it easier to work things out in the marriage. One woman explained that sharing similar values is immensely helpful in marriage, and that she felt the religious beliefs she holds would positively influence others' marriages as well.

“I do see couples who seem to have a happy marriage. . . . I think part of the reason that they do have a happy marriage is they have come into it with beliefs that match their partners' beliefs, and they have worked together to create the ideal that they've seen. And they stick with that ideal. So I guess if I were to say to somebody else—I would like to say to everybody, "Well, have the same beliefs that I do—the same religion that I do," but if I were to counsel somebody who wanted to have a happy marriage but who didn't want to accept my personal belief system, I would say, "Well, make sure at least that it matches your spouse's and that you have this ideal of what you want your marriage to be like and that you both stick with that ideal." (#13)

The value placed on shared beliefs, especially shared religious beliefs, in marriage implies that these individuals feel that God's involvement in marriage leads to marital

success. The beliefs that God can direct individuals in their choice of spouse and that any two righteous individuals can succeed in marriage lend support to the idea that individuals from intact families feel that God's participation in one's marriage is key to success.

Another belief particular to these individuals is the idea that it takes the efforts of both spouses to establish a successful marriage. "[A]s long as both of you are working at it, then it will be successful," one man stated. (#14) Another said:

I can honestly think, "If something happened to [my spouse], and I was able to find someone else to marry, that I would be able to have a good marriage with them too." As long as they had the same feelings as I did, you know? That we're going to make this work. But. . . marriage is work. It takes a lot of work. (#9)

Believing that the success of the relationship is dependent on both spouses is particular to individuals from intact families. Individuals from divorced families more commonly implied that they focused on the effect their individual efforts could have on the marriage. Even their reliance on God to strengthen them so that they could then strengthen their marriage reflects a focus on and an assurance in the effect of their own actions on the relationship.

Another belief that individuals from intact families expressed is that because temple marriage is eternal, it is a serious commitment. God's expectation that they will establish a lasting, healthy marriage motivates them to work toward that end. One man stated that he felt his marriage was successful because of

the fact that we have the gospel, both as a background and as an eternal foundation. [M]arriages that don't have that perspective of, "Well, this is for eternity, and. . . we have to do our part for this to work," you know,—it would be easy to back out. [S]o I think that perspective of, "This is eternal, and there are covenants that we've made," . . . is a big help. (#12)

Individuals from intact families seem to be motivated to maintain a lasting marriage because of their understanding that God expects their marriage to last. Individuals from divorced families, however, appear to be motivated by a desire to avoid the issues and pain divorce bring.

Similarities

In addition to examining the beliefs that are particular to those of each background, analyzing the beliefs that were universally valued by respondents from divorced families as well as respondents from intact families reveals further insight. Individuals from both backgrounds believe that religious actions nourish a marriage. They also believe that every marriage has challenges and requires work. They believe that a temple marriage can be eternal, the temple sealing ordinance is what enables families to be eternal, and that they have made covenants with God regarding their families. Nearly all expressed the belief that divorce will not be considered an option in their marriage except for in extreme circumstances. One other belief individuals from both backgrounds hold is that fulfilling personal wants is not as important as maintaining a successful relationship.

Although individuals from both backgrounds believe that religious actions nourish a marriage, children of divorce seem to utilize spiritual help to strengthen self, while children of intact families rely on it to strengthen the couple relationship.

Individuals from both backgrounds believe that every marriage has challenges. It appears that for individuals from divorced families, this feeds into their low tolerance of divorce. For many of them, experience and their sense of reason have led them to believe that all relationships require effort; therefore, divorce will not remove challenges from

one's life. Rather, they believe that improving one's abilities to alleviate and resolve conflict is a better way to handle challenges.

It seems, however, that for individuals from intact families, the belief that every marriage has challenges requires them to adjust their expectations about marital satisfaction. Several expressed their feeling that they found it helpful or necessary to change their expectation that marriage would be easier or that marital satisfaction would be more continuous or would require less personal effort. As one said,

I expected marriage to be easy. [I thought], "We're just going to love each other." And it works for the first six months or year or so. . . .
Before you get married, you love each other, but it's almost as if it's more of infatuation version than love. I mean you really don't. . . know 'em.
It's not that. . . you don't love 'em. It's love, but. . . the form changes as you get to know 'em better and you go through challenges together. . . ." (#14)

Although children of intact families frequently mentioned the need for adjustment of expectations, children of divorce did not report as frequently that they struggled with unmet expectations.

Another belief common to individuals from both backgrounds is that marriage can be eternal, that the sealing ordinance is essential to family relationships continuing beyond the grave, and that they have made covenants with God regarding their families. However, it seems that for many individuals from divorced families, the temple sealing ordinance is associated with an event that took place the day they were married, while for many individuals from intact families, the temple sealing ordinance is associated with divine expectations of and help in their current relationship.

For example, when asked how he felt about his temple sealing, one child of divorce replied, "Just really good. Really happy about it. You know, it's the ideal way to

start our marriage. There's lots of ways to start a marriage, and, you know, that's the best one. So that was good." (#17)

In contrast, another individual, a child of an intact family, responded:

Well, I'll start on the actual experience first. [I]t was a good experience. Positive feelings towards it, but it's kind of a blur, really.

[B]ut in general—in a more general sense, honestly, I probably don't understand it or appreciate it at the level that I should. Maybe none of us do. It's like the scriptures—you can just keep going deeper and deeper. I probably don't think about it enough. . . and. . . think about the blessings of it enough. And the things that are required from it enough.

So—but grateful for it. I mean, I guess, it's underneath everything. 'Cause you know that it's there. You know that you need to do your part. And I think tied into that, once the kids start coming, it adds another layer of gratitude and desire to do your part because here are all these other people you want to spend eternity with. (#12)

It appears that individuals from intact families more often rely upon their temple sealing to help them overcome challenges and establish a successful marriage.

Individuals from divorced families of origin as well as those from intact families reported a belief that divorce was not an option in their marriage except for in extreme circumstances. For children of divorce, however, this low tolerance of divorce seems to be based upon a desire to avoid the negative ramifications of divorce for oneself and one's children, while for children of intact families, low tolerance of divorce seems to stem from their belief that God expects them to establish a healthy, lasting marriage.

One child of divorce spoke of her low tolerance of divorce in these terms:

I always think whenever things are really hard or we're having a hard time, I always think back like, "I'm never going to divorce this person. I'm not going to, no matter what, unless he does something, and he doesn't want. . . ." You know? And so we just never get to that point. . . . I think I just always think back to that, and I remember that very clearly because it's something I really wanted. And my answer's really, you know, you choose if you're going to get divorced or not, . . . but for me, at least, it was never an option. (#15)

However, a woman from an intact family described the reason for her reluctance to give up on marriage in this way.

“I think that [the belief that] God is involved in marriage has influenced my attitude that marriage is something worth working on—worth keeping it alive. So that's a key belief.

He wants marriage to succeed overall—healthy marriage. . . . He wants marriage to be a healthy relationship that will last beyond the grave. That He wants marriage to be a relationship where a family can grow, where children are invited into the relationship.

So, therefore, if I'm not being particularly kind or lending to my husband's emotional healthiness, then, you know, that God doesn't want that—that He wants me to not just leave the marriage because I'm not being kind to my husband, but that He wants me to work on being kinder to my husband.” (#13)

It seems that although individuals both from divorced and from intact families believe the doctrine of eternal marriage, children of divorce are reluctant to consider divorce as an option because of experience and reason, and children of intact families are reluctant to consider divorce because they feel that God expects them to maintain successful marriages.

Another belief that individuals from both backgrounds hold is that fulfilling personal wants is not as important as maintaining a successful relationship. It appears that individuals from divorced families see this belief as important in maintaining marital stability. As one said,

[W]e both have the attitude that it takes two to make a big problem, and so we try to be understanding and patient. And. . . give in when the other person feels strongly about something. And it's good to just let them have their way, if they feel strongly. . . .

If the decision—if their decision—a decision you make together—you may not fully like it, agree with it, but it's probably not going to be harmful to go with that. . . . (#17)

Individuals from intact families, however, appear to focus on the value this belief has on marital quality. One woman said that foregoing personal desires to sacrifice for the other increases love and happiness.

I remember reading Steven Covey saying that when he met with a couple after he had given one of his talks, and the man said, “Well, I don’t love my wife any more. What could I do?” and Steven Covey said, “Love her.” And he said, “I just told you, I don’t love her.” And he said, “Well, love her.” And finally he said, “You love her, you serve her, you do things for her, and you will grow to love her again.”

There’s a lot to be said for that word. So much into being self-fulfilled.

I always remember what President Kimball said, which was, “If you forget yourself, and serve others, you will find yourself, and there’ll be a lot more to find.” And I like that. To me, the gospel of Jesus Christ teaches you how to live happily. [M]y grandmother really said it. “It isn’t just for the other world, it’s for this world. Right now. You’ll be happier; you’ll be more fulfilled if you live the gospel.” (#11)

This reflects the idea that to individuals from divorced families, success in marriage appears to be based on marital stability, while for individuals from intact families, marital success centers around marital quality as well.

Methods of Acquiring Beliefs

These interviews were also analyzed to understand the ways in which individuals *acquire* beliefs. The methods of acquiring beliefs mentioned by individuals with divorced parents did not appear to be notably different than the methods mentioned by individuals from intact families. This may indicate that members of The Church of Jesus Christ, regardless of family background, use the same kinds of methods to incorporate beliefs into their lives. It may also be that a research method other than self-report would be more effective in uncovering methods of acquiring beliefs and would enable deeper exploration.

The methods that *were* mentioned by participants fell into four main patterns. One method of acquiring beliefs mentioned by both groups is the process of hearing a belief and simply feeling it is true. For example, one woman talked about how she acquired the belief that family relationships can be eternal.

I think growing up I've always had a very strong testimony of the Church and eternal families. I always remember being so concerned that [my] grandma and grandpa weren't sealed in the temple. . . . I would always just think about this stuff over and over again. . . . It's just what I think, you know. So I think I've always had a testimony. I've always known families are eternal, you know, and I think about it a lot. (#15)

She apparently heard the belief when she was very young and always felt that it was true.

Another method of acquiring beliefs that was mentioned by respondents of both backgrounds is hearing a belief, acting on it, experiencing benefits, and then incorporating it into one's lifestyle. One respondent described how this process led to her belief that demonstrating common courtesies to a spouse nurtures marriage.

[I]t seems like we read some Conference talks before we were married, and one of 'em was talking about common courtesies, and maybe I'm—maybe it's not a talk, but they said when people's marriages are bad, the first thing that they start to do—the first thing that kind of leads to divorce or whatever—is people let go of the common courtesies, and. . . they just go out the window. So, when you see couples who . . . don't give each other common courtesies, then that's the first step to having a worse marriage. Sometimes I realize, “Oh, I . . . didn't even ask him how his day was. That wasn't very nice. And I just complained to him.” Then I realize, “I need to ask him how *his* day was. It's not like I'm the only one who had a day today.” So it helps me to. . . stay on track. (#9)

A third method of acquiring beliefs that was common to both groups is similar to the process mentioned above; however, the step of hearing or being taught the belief is removed. This method consists of simply experiencing, analyzing the experience(s), and

then developing a belief. One woman talked about how through this process, she acquired the belief that one cannot change the other person, only oneself.

I think we kind of developed it. I think when you first get married, you try to change them. . . and you're much happier when you don't. You just try to change your own attitudes towards them or what they do. . . and just leave 'em alone, you know what I mean? Because you can't change anybody but yourself. (#1)

Her disappointment at the beginning of her marriage led her to analyze what was effective in establishing a happy relationship and to develop the belief that seeking to change her own attitude is the most effective.

Another person described the development of his belief that focusing on strengths instead of weaknesses in others is helpful in establishing healthy relationships.

You know, . . . as a missionary, I had a mission president who was amazing at that. He just ignored weaknesses, and so he just would praise you up a storm—all that you did well. He was very loving and focused on the good. He just could always find good, you know? And so I'm sure—I know I learned some from that. (#12)

Another method of acquiring beliefs mentioned by individuals from both backgrounds is the process of watching someone *else* experience something, analyzing it, and developing a belief from the observation. One woman explained the development of her belief that seeking to meet her spouse's needs, even in the area of housekeeping, is important in marriage.

[Y]ou'll think that sounds really funny, but I remember him telling me when we were dating that he knew another reason his parents divorced [was] that his dad was really annoyed because he never had socks that matched in his drawer. And he had a professional job, and he'd go to get his socks, and he never had any. He actually said that in the court. So, . . . it's trivial, but [I try to make sure it's never a problem]. (#18)

Although these methods were common to all respondents, individuals from divorced families more frequently mentioned that they rehearse and act on beliefs until

they are incorporated, that they make a conscious effort to repeat the belief until it becomes a habit or a more natural response. For example, when asked how she gets through challenging times in marriage, one individual said,

I don't know. I think you have to have certain tools that you always use. For instance, like if you're depressed or something or worried about something, it's just you have to just consciously say like, "Okay, I'm all right. I just need to do this. They said to do this."

Or you can use the tools of starting to whistle, or starting to sing, or to build your own spirit and trying to take control of your thoughts, and just consciously trying to worry about things that you can change and letting go of things you can't change. (#1)

This lends support to the theme that individuals with divorce in family of origin focus on the effect of their own efforts in marriage. They seem to feel that individually they can affect success in marriage and that with God's help they can be strengthened in their individual efforts.

DISCUSSION

Implications

Much of the research on the intergenerational transmission of divorce has centered on documenting the phenomenon and exploring the vehicle by which it occurs; however, focusing on the ways children of divorce are *succeeding* in marriage strengthens confidence and gives direction to those who are concerned about their ability to establish a healthy marriage.

One of the most important implications of this study is that it provides specific aid to individuals with divorced parents by outlining behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs that those who are overcoming the intergenerational transmission of divorce feel are key to their success. People who are hoping to establish successful marriages can strive to adopt the behaviors, attitudes, and beliefs identified in this study. Moreover, several methods by which beliefs are acquired are described, further aiding individuals in their quest to develop marriage-saving beliefs.

This research also suggests that religious involvement can mediate the effects of family of origin structure on chances of marital success. Studies have shown that children of divorced parents are more likely than others to divorce. They are less likely to have attitudes of commitment to marriage, low tolerance of divorce, and optimism about being able to work out problems. However, the respondents in this study who are children of divorce *have* adopted these attitudes. Further research may yield insight into

how they have acquired these attitudes, but it appears that religious involvement and belief has aided them in the development of these marriage-nurturing attitudes.

Another implication for children of divorce is that, in addition to focusing on marital stability, relationships may be improved by considering marital quality. Respondents from intact families feel that marital quality is improved by building on strengths and commonalities of the couple. As children of divorce build on strengths in their relationship and focus on commonalities, marital satisfaction may increase.

Individuals from intact families can also benefit from this research by learning to see, as children of divorce have suggested, that divorce often brings increased complexity and hurt into the lives of the divorcees and their children. Understanding this perspective may lower their tolerance of divorce, thereby increasing their likelihood of marital success.

Suggestions for Further Research

One limitation of this study is that because the sample was small and non-representative, the results are not generalizable to a larger population. Selecting a larger, representative sample and conducting quantitative research could verify the generalizability of these results to other members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Further research could also establish the applicability of these findings to members of other faiths.

Another limitation of this research is that the results have not shown conclusively whether religious involvement has a mediating, moderating, or interactionary effect on the relationship between structure in family of origin and chances of marital success.

Again, conducting quantitative research on a representative population could clarify the relationship between these variables.

APPENDIX A

KEY CONCEPTS

active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: individual whose attendance at weekly religious services of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints averages at least 80% and who carries a valid recommend to enter the temples of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

child of divorce: individual whose biological parents divorced before the individual himself/herself married

marital quality: satisfaction or fulfillment derived from a marriage; based on an individual's subjective self-evaluation

marital stability: length of time spouses have been continuously married to each other and living together

successful marriage: a marriage that has lasted at least 8 years (exhibits marital stability)

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT DOCUMENT

Consent Document

BACKGROUND

Before you decide if you will participate in this research study, it is important for you to understand why this research is being done and what it will involve. Once you understand these things, please take time to carefully consider whether or not you want to participate in this study.

The purpose of the research is to speak with members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints who grew up in divorced families to discover how they adopt attitudes that lead to successful marriages. This may help others with similar backgrounds build successful marriages.

STUDY PROCEDURE

It will take you 30-90 minutes to complete this interview. During the interview, you will be asked several questions about the behaviors and attitudes that make your marriage successful. You will be asked about how you acquired those attitudes. You will also be asked about your parents' marriage.

You may choose not to answer any of the questions. You can stop the interview at any time.

Your responses will be recorded on cassette tape and later written down. When the responses on the tape are written down, your real name will not be used. After the information from the tape is written down, the tape recording will be destroyed.

Your responses and the responses of others will then be reviewed to find themes or patterns that allow us to understand better how people who grew up with a divorced parent are establishing successful marriages of their own.

RISKS

The risks of this study are minimal. You may feel upset thinking about or talking about personal information related to your family. These risks are similar to those you experience when discussing personal information with others. If you feel upset from this experience, you can tell Elizabeth, and she will tell you about resources available to help. You can also stop the interview at any time if you wish.

BENEFITS

There are no direct benefits for taking part in this study. However, hopefully the information that comes from this study will help individuals from divorced families build successful marriages.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Your data will be kept confidential. The cassette tapes will be stored in a locked cabinet until they are transcribed. Only the interviewer will have access to the cabinet. After the interviews have been transcribed, the cassette tapes will be destroyed. In any written work, published or unpublished, your name will not be associated with your answers. A number will be used in place of your name.

The purpose of the study is not to uncover or track reportable incidents of abuse or neglect. However, if you disclose unreported actual or suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a child, disabled adult, or elderly adult, the interviewer will stop the interview and report the information to Child Protective Services (CPS), Adult Protective Services (APS) or the nearest law enforcement agency.

The interviewer may be required to report other information from the interview, such as serious threats to you or to public health or safety.

PERSON TO CONTACT

If you have questions, complaints, or concerns about this study, you can contact the interviewer, Elizabeth Miles, at (801) 664-5906 or at em45x@hotmail.com. If you feel you have been hurt by participating in the study, please call Elizabeth at (801) 664-5906 who may be reached during 8:00 A.M. and 8:00 P.M.

Institutional Review Board: Contact the Institutional Review Board (IRB) if you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant. Also, contact the IRB if you have questions, complaints or concerns which you do not feel you can discuss with the investigator. The University of Utah IRB may be reached by phone at (801) 581-3655 or by e-mail at irb@hsc.utah.edu.

Research Participant Advocate: You may also contact the Research Participant Advocate (RPA) by phone at (801) 581-3803 or by email at participant.advocate@hsc.utah.edu.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION

You can decide whether or not you will participate in this study. If you choose not to participate or to stop the interview, it will not cause you to lose any benefit you are already allowed to receive. It will not affect your relationship with the interviewer.

COSTS AND COMPENSATION TO PARTICIPANTS

There is no cost to you other than your time to participate in this study. You will receive no compensation for participating in this study.

CONSENT

By signing this consent form, I confirm I have read the information in this consent form and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I am free to withdraw at any time, without

giving a reason and without cost. I will be given a signed copy of this consent form. I voluntarily agree to take part in this study.

Printed Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Date

Elizabeth Miles

Signature of Researcher or Staff

Date

APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. [If applicable] **How old were you when your parents divorced?**
2. [If applicable] **Where did you live following the divorce?**
3. **When you were growing up, was your father an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?**
4. **When you were growing up, was your mother an active member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?**
5. **Were your parents sealed in the temple? If so, were they originally married in the temple or were they sealed in the temple following the marriage?**
6. **Have you been sealed in the temple? Were you originally married in the temple or were you sealed in the temple later?**
7. **Do you feel your marriage is successful?**

Prompt: If you were to describe your marriage to someone, how would you do so?

BEHAVIORS

8. **What do you do that helps you have a happy marriage?**

Prompt: What was important for you in establishing a successful marriage?

Prompt: Do you consciously try to make your marriage a success?

Prompt: How?

Prompt: Why?

Prompt: What kinds of things do you do that make you and your spouse happier?

Prompt: What does your spouse appreciate?

Prompt: How often would you say you do that?

Prompt: Why do you choose to do that?

Prompt: Does your marriage seem to improve when you do certain things? What kinds of things?

Prompt: Did your parents do that in their marriage?

Prompt: What do you do differently than your parents did?

ATTITUDES

9. An attitude is a tendency to view or respond to something favorably. What attitudes do you have that help you view your marriage favorably or respond to your spouse favorably? What attitudes strengthen your marriage?

Prompt: When you think about your spouse, what kinds of feelings do you have?

Prompt: Are there specific things about your spouse that you have especially positive feelings about?

Prompt: Are there specific areas of your relationship you feel generally positive about?

Prompt: Which behaviors that you've mentioned (yours or your spouse's) do you think contribute significantly to the positive feeling you have about your marriage?

Prompt: Why?

Prompt: What are some of the most important areas in marriage to you?

Prompt: You said that you ____ [refer to behavior from previous question]. What motivates you to do that?

Prompt: In which ways is your marriage better than others' you've seen?

Prompt: [Refer to answer to question about behaviors]. How do you feel or what are you thinking when you do those kinds of things?

Prompt: What are some of the defining characteristics of your spouse?

Prompt: When you are feeling less than your best, how do you interact with your spouse? Why?

Prompt: Think of a time when your expectations about marriage or about your spouse were not met. How did you handle it? Why did you carry on?

Prompt: Think of a time that seemed hard or when there was tension between you and your spouse. What helped you resolve the difficulty?

Prompt: Have you ever considered divorce? Why or why not?

Prompt: What might you do if your marriage seemed less than satisfying at some point?

Prompt: If there were a significant threat to your marriage, how would you be likely to respond?

Prompt: Do you feel that, because of your parents' divorce, you have done things differently than other members of the Church in order to build a successful marriage?

Prompt: Are there other attitudes that you have about marriage that have helped you have a successful marriage?

Prompt: What attitudes do you feel spouses need in order to have a successful marriage?

BELIEFS

10. A belief is a concept that we attach certain characteristics or value to or that we feel will lead to certain outcomes. Are there beliefs that have influenced your attitudes about marriage?

Prompt: Are there certain beliefs that you feel strongly about that have influenced your ability to have a successful marriage?

Prompt: What are some of those beliefs?

Prompt: How did those beliefs become a part of you?

Prompt: Are there religious beliefs that have helped you in your marriage?

Prompt: Are there any other beliefs that you feel have influenced your marriage?

Prompt: Have there been times when you were struggling that a specific belief helped strengthen your marriage?

Prompt: Have religious practices helped strengthen your marriage? Which ones? Why?

Prompt: Do you feel that the fact that you're a member of the Church influences the quality of your marriage? How?

Prompt: Were you counseled by Church leaders regarding your parents' divorce? Does any of that counseling seem to have been particularly helpful?

Prompt: What is the temple sealing?

Prompt: How do you feel about the/your temple sealing?

Prompt: Has the temple sealing ordinance influenced your marriage? How?

Prompt: What were your feelings about the Church when your parents divorced? Have your feelings changed since then? How?

Prompt: Did the fact that your parents divorced affect the feelings that you have toward temple sealings?

11. How have you acquired those attitudes or beliefs?

Prompt: Why do you think you feel the way you do about marriage?

Prompt: What has led you to feel the way you do about marriage?

Prompt: What do you think leads others to feel the way they do about marriage?

Prompt: You said that ____ [refer to attitude or belief from previous question] is important to you. Do you think you have always felt that way?

Prompt: How did you come to feel that way?

Prompt: Did you think you made a conscious decision to have that attitude/belief in marriage?

Prompt: Do you know what might have prompted that, either before or during your marriage?

Prompt: Your parents were divorced. Do you recall that having made you feel nervous about getting married yourself?

Prompt: How did you cope with those feelings?

Prompt: How would you advise someone else to overcome concerns about being able to establish a successful marriage?

12. Are there things that are different about you or your marriage than your parents or your parents' relationship?

Prompt: What might have helped your parents have a more successful marriage?

Prompt: Are there things you intentionally *do* differently than your parent did to strengthen your own marriage?

Prompt: Are there ways in which you think about marriage or about your spouse that are different from what your parents seemed to think?

Prompt: You mentioned that your beliefs about ____ strengthen your marriage. Do you think your parents felt the way you do?

Prompt: Did you see things at home that you wanted to change? What kinds of things?

APPENDIX D

PRINTED QUESTIONNAIRE

1. I am ☐ female ☐ male. (Check one.)

2. How long have you been married?

3. Circle the highest level of education you have attained.

Pre-high school High school Bachelor's Master's Doctorate Post-doctorate

4. Approximately how much do you earn per year? (Check one.)

☐ less than \$25,000

☐ \$25,000-50,000

☐ \$50,000-100,000

☐ \$100,000+

5. Are you employed? If so, part-time or full-time?

6. How old were you when you became a member of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

7. Approximately how often do you attend church services for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints?

8. Do you have a temple recommend?

9. How old were you when you married?

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